

Media, PA —As part of his commitment to work directly with constituents who are well-versed in crucial issues facing the Seventh Congressional District, Congressman Joe Sestak (PA-7) today convened the first meeting of his newly formed Labor Advisory Committee. The meeting took place at the Media Borough Hall. — Congressman Sestak is Vice Chair of the House Small Business Committee, and serves as a member of the House Education and Labor Committee, and its subcommittee on Health, Employment, Labor and Pensions.

“The challenges facing the more than 300,000 working men and women in the Seventh Congressional District are diverse and complex,” the Congressman said. “And these workers have no greater champions than the organized labor movement. By bringing together representatives of a wide cross-section of labor unions, I am able to gain unique insights into the impact that local and national labor events, including legislative initiatives, layoffs and plant closings, and economic shifts, have upon the welfare of workers in the Delaware Valley. These insights are crucial to my efforts—as Chair of the Small Business Committee and a member of the House Education and Labor Committee—to draft legislation that will improve the lives of working men and women. Convening this Committee also affords me the opportunity to report back to the district on what has been happening in Washington in regard to labor issues.”

The Congressman advised members of the Advisory Committee regarding the status of important legislation related to labor issues. The Congressman is a co-sponsor of the following bills:

- The Expansion & Modernization of Trade Adjustment Assistance – This legislation extends coverage and safeguards for workers employed by firms experiencing significant layoffs due to the relocation of companies to offshore sites. The legislation passed the House and is pending in the Senate.
- The Early Warning & Health Care for Workers Affected by Globalization Act – Requires that workers receive earlier warning when a company is planning a closure or significant layoffs, and provides greater access to health care for such workers following a closure or layoff. The bill passed the House in November and is pending in the Senate.
- The Right to Organize for Skilled and Professional Workers (RESPECT) Act – The Act provides greater clarity to the National Labor Relations Act, and specifically this act’s definition

of “supervisor.” By defining this term too broadly, many skilled workers, including nurses and building trade workers, were being denied the opportunity to organize and bargain collectively. The pending RESPECT Act which would disallow employers from classifying workers as supervisors in order to deny them the right to participate in collective bargaining.

- The Fair Minimum Wage Act – This legislation led to the July 24th increase in the Minimum Wage from \$5.15 per hour to \$7.25 per hour over the next two years. This is the first time the Minimum Wage has been increased in ten years.
- The Employee Free Choice Act – This Act would enable workers to bargain for better wages, benefits, and working conditions by restoring their rights to form unions through majority sign-up procedures, increased penalties for violations, and first contract arbitration. The legislation passed the House in March and is still pending in the Senate.
- The Lily Ledbetter Fair Pay Act – The Act would rectify a recent Supreme Court ruling that made it harder for workers to pursue pay discrimination claims. The bill restores prior law that every discriminatory paycheck is a new act of discrimination, restarting the clock for filing a claim. The bill passed the house and is pending in the Senate.
- Collective Bargaining Rights for Public Safety Workers – The legislation, which passed the House in July and is pending in the Senate, would guarantee the rights of firefighters, police officers, and emergency medical service workers in all 50 states the right to bargain collectively for better wages, benefits, and working conditions.
- The Paul Wellstone Mental Health and Addiction Equity Act – The Act would require group health insurance plans to place coverage for mental illnesses on an equal footing with physical ailments. The legislation is pending in the House.

The Congressman also discussed the following additional legislation which he supports:

- The Genetic Information Non-Discrimination Act – By an overwhelming majority of 420-3, the House passed this legislation, co-sponsored by the Congressman, which would protect working

men and women from discrimination due to the use of personal genetic information by employers or health insurers. The legislation is pending in the Senate.

- The Employment Non-Discrimination Act – This legislation, which passed the House in November and is pending in the Senate, prohibits employment discrimination based on a person's sexual orientation.
- The Green Jobs Act –This Act provides \$125 million in funding to establish national and state job training programs to train a quality workforce for “green” jobs such as solar panel manufacturers and green building construction workers, and to address job shortages that are impairing the growth of green industries. The Act passed the House in August and is pending in the Senate.
- The S-MINER Act – This pending legislation would make a number of critical improvements to the nation's mine safety and health laws.

Other issues discussed during the meeting included the need to retain and increase the number of manufacturing jobs in the Delaware Valley and across Pennsylvania, apprentice programs and the need to protect and enhance workforce development training programs, the rising cost of health care; the loss of earned pensions, minority representation, educational funding and opportunities for the children of working people, and the need to improve mass transit and to offset increasing petroleum fuel costs.

The Labor Advisory Committee is one of a number of issue and action-oriented advisory bodies Congressman Sestak is establishing to stay connected with the needs of 7th Congressional District constituents. Currently these include the FAA Flight Path Redesign Expert Advisory Board, the 7th CD Veterans Advisory Committee, and the Committee for Excellence in Community Education. Additional groups will include Congressman Sestak's Seniors Forum, an Economic Advisory Committee, a Health Care Advisory Committee, an Environmental Advisory Committee, an Anti-Violence and Community Action Committee, a Women in Business Advisory Committee, an Elementary and Secondary Education Advisory Committee, and a Higher Education and Workforce Development Committee.

*Born and raised in Delaware County, former 3-star Admiral Joe Sestak served in the Navy for*

*31 years and now serves as the Representative from the 7th District of Pennsylvania. He led a series of operational commands at sea, including Commander of an aircraft carrier battle group of 30 U.S. and allied ships with over 15,000 sailors and 100 aircraft that conducted operations in Afghanistan and Iraq. After 9/11, Joe was the first Director of "Deep Blue," the Navy's anti-terrorism unit that established strategic and operations policies for the "Global War on Terrorism." He served as President Clinton's Director for Defense Policy at the National Security Council in the White House, and holds a Ph.D. in Political Economy and Government from Harvard University.*